

STRATEGIES *for* HELPING CHILDREN WITH DEPLOYMENT



Deployments are a fact of life for military families. Children will all react to the separation in different ways. The following are some tips to assist parents.

- Remember that you are the “expert” on your child. You know what is normal behavior for her/him and will be the best one to notice when things are out of sync.
- Reassure your children often that they are loved by those at home and by their deployed parent. Give lots of hugs.
- As appropriate, be honest with your children. Trying to hide things from them will only lead them to imagine the situation is much worse than it really is.
- Understand your child’s level of development. Know what is normal behavior for your child’s age. Be aware of changes and seek assistance early.
- Listen to your children and help to clear up any misunderstandings they may have (Mom/Dad does get to eat and sleep even though their bed/refrigerator is at home!). Be with your child when watching/reading news so you can answer questions. In times of crisis, limit their exposure to media so that it does not increase their anxiety.
- Expect regression, changes, and stress due to separation.
- Talk about your child’s feelings and allow him or her to do the same. Accept those feelings even though they may be very different from your own.
- Encourage your children to talk. Let them share options, suggestions, and solutions for problems. Encourage them to express anger verbally, not physically.
- Provide additional adult relationships for your children, which may include grandparents, neighbors, friends, teachers, religious leaders, coaches, scout leaders, etc.
- Inform your child’s teachers/guidance counselors about the deployment so they are better able to provide assistance to the child if necessary. Ask if there is a deployment support group available in the school. FFSC staff can help start one if requested.
- Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words. Children learn their coping skills from those around them. How well you cope with the deployment will have a significant influence on how your children will react.
- Take care of yourself. You need to eat well, get sufficient rest and exercise, and spend time doing things you enjoy. If you don’t take care of yourself, you won’t be able to care for your children.



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